

To the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee
Senator John W. Fonfara
Representative Jeffrey J. Berger

Testimony regarding the elimination of the Community Investment Act

My name is Mary DeCroce. I live in Southington, CT and am president of Southington Community Cultural Arts. Our organization acts as an umbrella for all art organizations and artists to come together to connect the arts to the community and provide creative places for our residents and visitors.

In 2011, when our Town Council decided to move municipal offices that were occupying a historically registered building on the corner of the Town Green to a newer location, town council woman Dawn Miceli, contacted me and asked if I was interested in saving the building and renovating it into an Arts Center. (There were other council members at the time who believed the building was in such poor condition it needed to be torn down).

We first contacted the State Historic Preservation Office and CT Trust for Historic Preservation who told us because the building was registered on the state's historical registry we had access to funds, through the Community Investment Act for a feasibility study, architectural fees and restoration. Brad Schide a CT Circuit Rider was one of the first to tour the building and reassure us the building had the "bones" to become an Arts Center. He directed us to make an application for our first grant, a HPTAG that would provide a feasibility study to prove to the town council the building could be saved and restored. That \$20,000 grant brought us to where we are today; \$1.3 million dollars in grants and donations for the \$1.4 million dollar renovation and over \$140,000 to help sustain the Arts Center.

I fully believe that without the HPTAG grant from the Community Investment Act our project would not have been successful. The grant helped provide the feasibility study that proved to the town the building did not need to be destroyed and that funding to renovate a historical building into an Arts Center was available. It became the impetus to research the market for other funding, apply for grants, and eventually receive a \$500,000 bond issue from the state and a tax credit from the State Historic Preservation Office for over \$300,000. It gave our project credibility and allowed private foundations and investors to also fund the project.

Our renovation began November 2014 and will be completed and paid for by October 2015. There are other historical properties throughout the state and in Southington that also need the CIA grants to get started and be successful. I am asking you to reconsider the elimination of funding so that they too can achieve what we were able to do.